Acorn NEWS
LETTER
ISSUE 27 SUMMER

NEW HOME WILL HELP US TO GROW

"The move to Vision Park will upgrade facilities to the best contemporary standards and will truly reflect the status of the company."

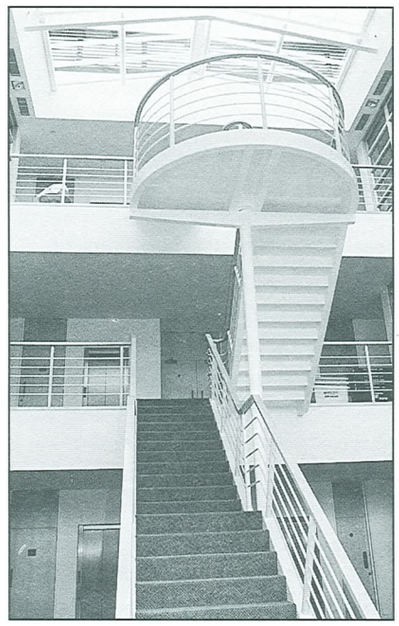
That is the view of Sam Wauchope, the group managing director, who sees the move as an essential ingredient in the company's growth plans.

It will be the first time in over 10 years that the vast majority of staff have worked together on one site, helping create the right environment for the company to exploit its true potential.

Sam Wauchope believes that business is entering a new era when the winners will be those who can develop the best teamwork through good communication and a cross fertilisation of ideas.

"We can be proud of what the company has achieved so far," he says, "but we have to move forward and develop new markets for our products. It will be a great benefit to us being together."

The new Acorn House at Vision Park will also bring a much better working environment. It will be air-conditioned, give people more space and allow the installation of first class technical facilities.



To visiting customers it will create a first-class image of the company and will allow far better presentation of the products and services offered.

It is not a move which has been entered into in haste. As long ago as 1986 a detailed study was carried out to assess the implications of a move to a single site.

Escalating property prices in the late eighties ruled out a move at that time, but realism returned with the recession and in 1990 the project was revived.

An intensive investigation was carried out involving many properties in and around the Cambridge area.

Eventually only one fulfilled all the requirements. These included a single building, large enough to accommodate everyone and leaving room for growth; an attractive facility to project the right image; and, perhaps most important of all, a location which would still be convenient for the majority of the Acorn team.

The Vision Park building met all these criteria and in the end the choice was not too difficult. "Selecting the building, negotiating the contract and making the move has been an excellent example of the teamwork we want to build upon for the future," says Sam Wauchope. "A team drawn from right across the company has worked together magnificently to meet a very tight timescale. The project team of Peter Dawson, John Marshall and Denice Cook have done a superb job masterminding the move."

ACORN NEW ZEALAND HEADS FOR THE SNOW

It's that time of year again when Acorn staff in New Zealand head south - because south is where the snow is.

Several of the staff at Acorn New Zealand are keen skiers and try to plan their visits to the South Island at this time of year.

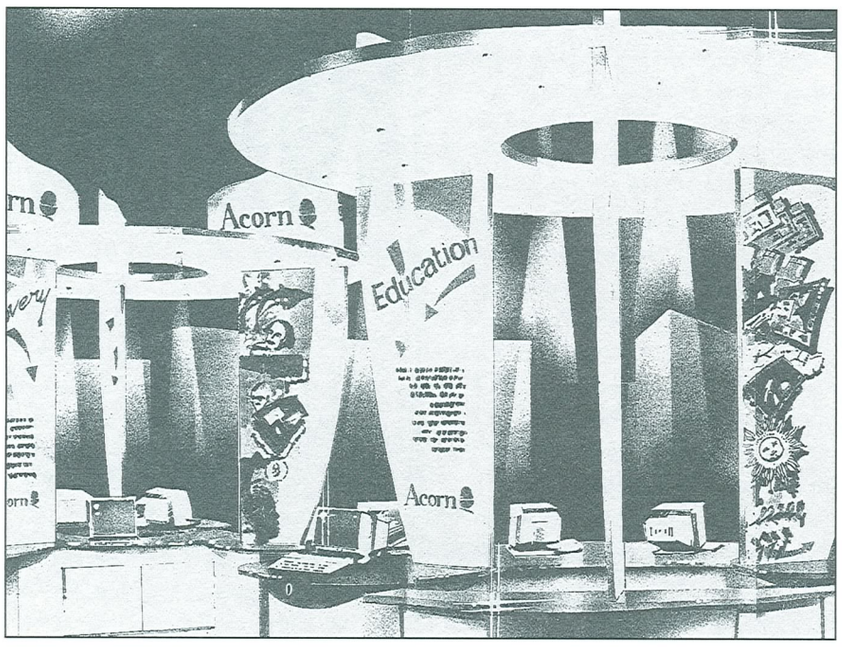
Queenstown and Wanaka are the places to be at present. These are towns close to the major ski fields and Queenstown Primary school (a solid Acorn site) receives a lot of attention from both Russell Layton (Education Adviser) and John Buchanan (EBU Manager). Mark Sussex (Consumer Manager) is working out how he can get a branch of Noel Leemings (our Consumer Distributors) to open in either town.

ACORN WORLD

COMPANY TAKES OVER RUNNING OF THE WEMBLEY SHOW

Acorn World, which is being held in Hall 1 in Wembley Conference Centre from October 29 to 31, will be the biggest and best Acorn Show ever staged.

Formerly the Acorn User Show, this year it is being run for the first time by Acorn itself, and show director Kevin Coleman is confident that the support team, comprising people from all divisions, will put together a memorable occasion for visitors of all ages.



The design for the education stand

In addition to a wide range of stands featuring suppliers of Acorn software and ancillary equipment, there will be nine areas featuring different aspects of the company itself.

The overall aim is to create a sense of occasion and to look after visitors from the moment they arrive at the exhibition to the time they leave.

This begins with the ticket area, which will be in the style of an airline or spaceport departure lounge. Tickets will be colour-coded so that the flow of visitors can be properly managed.

The main Acorn stand, which is the gateway to the exhibition, will highlight the latest products and bundles, and will include a preview of networking and multi-media.

The Acorn gallery will contain next generation technology. However, Acorn will not be discussing products under development. This display has been put together with the help of the Science Museum, and is being co-ordinated by Acorn's technical team.

One of the most spectacular exhibits at the exhibition will be on the Education in Action display. An abseiling tower will be used to illustrate the way Acorn computers can be used in classrooms. Children will be able to abseil down the tower whilst being monitored for such things as heart beat and respiration rates and the results will be shown when they reach the bottom.

A display showing Acorn in publishing will feature the production of a magazine and there will also be a special area where David Bell and his support team will be on hand to help people with technical questions. There will be a games arcade, which will be in the form of a crashed spaceship.

Great emphasis throughout the show is being put on visitor comfort. This year there will be much wider aisles to give people room to walk and also to accommodate wheelchairs for disabled visitors. There will be ground floor restaurants and to entertain the children there will be face painting, magicians and mime artists. There will even be a crèche where families can leave younger children. A wide range of promotional activities will be taking place throughout the period of the show. These include a Pocket Book Acorn computer prize draw. The Science Museum will be giving away free child and adult passes to visitors to their stand; Kodak will be inviting people to bring their films along and will put photos on to CD at a very low cost; and there will be a free Pocket Book computer given away every hour. People throughout Acorn are combining to stage this shop window for the company.

"We have taken over the exhibition in order to change its style and illustrate the change in customer base and direction at Acorn," says Kevin Coleman.

"Our customers now include educationalists, the publishing industry, and families using Acorn computers for home education and running small businesses. The idea of the exhibition is to show Acorn's credibility and professionalism and to create interest for all users," he says.

Acorn World is a very important event for the company and is the main focus for its last quarter activities.

All employees will be provided with family tickets and transport will be arranged for Saturday 30 October to the exhibition.

WELCOME TO NEW ACCOUNTANT

Tim Fahey has joined Acorn New Zealand as their new accountant. Tim was previously the accountant for Sak's, an exclusive clothing firm in Auckland. Everyone at the office is having to get used to seeing someone in very upmarket suits and ties!

Tim is a runner who has represented Auckland in middle distance events and sometimes decides to run home after work to relieve the pressures of the day. He also has an interest in fast motor cycles.

Looking at the new Acorn House, its hard to believe how far the company has come in such a short time. Rosemary Walker was one of the first employees and remembers the premises in Market Hill.

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

"The offices were three rooms down a passage next to the electricity showrooms," she says. "The passage was dark, damp and slippery."

The main product at that time was the Atom, which was sold either assembled or in kit form. Manufacture took place in a windmill at Frenches Lane, off Chesterton Road.

Space was soon at a premium at Market Hill and a move was made to Bridge Street, above the Scottish Provident offices.

Then in 1981 a more significant move was made to Cherry Hinton. Whereas desks and chairs had always been at a premium at Market Hill, car parking spaces became the incentive to arrive early at work.

The BBC computer and the Electron brought extremely rapid growth to Acorn and Janet Henson-Webb recalls that the company was recruiting about one hundred people per year up to the mid 80's.

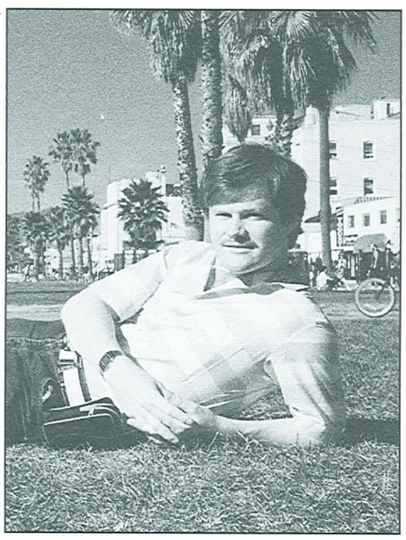
She also recalls going for her job interview at the Fulbourn Road site before it was properly completed. "The glass hadn't been installed at the front of the building," she says, "and as I sat there for my interview people were stepping through the walls."

Fulbourn Road had once been a water softening plant which had been lovingly re-designed by an architect with very strong views. He would not agree to a letterbox in the front door and Janet recalls that on wet and windy mornings the company's copy of the Financial Times usually had to be rescued from the nearby trees and hedges and then pieced together.

With the continuing rapid expansion, desk space soon became in short supply at Fulbourn Road. David Bell remembers arriving for his first day and finding no space available. Until room could be found, a patio table and chairs were obtained and he worked outside in the sunshine.

Those were the days!

NEW FACES AT ACORN OZ



Acorn Sydney: John Stokes

John Stokes has been appointed Service Manager following the promotion of Michael Etcell.

John is a Kiwi and has worked with Acorn New Zealand, where he gained his experience with Acorn computer systems. John travelled on a working holiday throughout the UK in 1987 to 1991, before returning to Australia.

It is good to have him on board and he has settled in with the crew of four at Acorn Sydney very quickly.

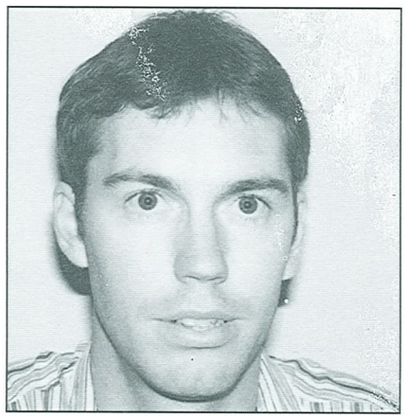
Acorn Melbourne: Nick Tozer

Nick Tozer has been appointed Technical Support Consultant. Nick has been based in South Australia as a programmer on Acorn systems and as a technical support person for Acorn equipment for the past three and a half years.

The previous technical support consultant, Alan Williams, has now left Acorn Melbourne, although he will still maintain contact with the company on a contract basis.

Viviana Cairo joined the Melbourne office in January as assistant to Greg Sebire. Viviana previously worked in the legal field.

Also joining the Melbourne office as the receptionist is Lisa Radovic, and Amanda Warrensmith has rejoined the company in the accounts department, after being away on maternity leave.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I am not sure who was responsible for writing the piece "Do you remember SID?", but it certainly didn't paint the whole picture with regard to the heritage of the system.

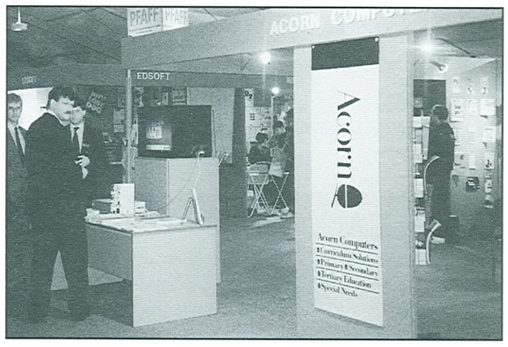
For example, the reason why 35 computers were required was because Acorn was probably the only computer manufacturer to provide a gateway from Prestel and Micronet into SID. This meant that any of Prestel's users could access SID just by accessing a special page on Prestel. A requirement imposed on us by BT was to be able to support 20 users. The rest of the machines existed to support dial-up lines (i.e. a customer could ring SID directly) and Fastrak lines (access to SID via local numbers).

One of the reasons why SID was scrapped was because Prestel decided to cancel the Micronet area, thus severing the gateway link.

As you can see from the above, I certainly remember SID, and in a way I miss it as well. At the time, it was close to, if not at the front of comms technology. Of course, things have moved on, but we shouldn't dismiss the past so lightly.

Philip Colmer

HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL ANTIPODEAN ROADSHOW



A highly successful trade mission to Australia and New Zealand for software companies which support the Acorn range took place in June and early July.

The mission was organised by the Australian and New Zealand Trade Advisory Committee in conjunction with the DTI and comprised a party of over 20, including some of the best known names in Acorn software. Representing Acorn were managing director Sam Wauchope and international technical support manager Ian Sewell.

The mission began its tour in New Zealand with four days of workshop sessions during which time teachers, dealers and end users were able to find out about the latest software and hardware developments.

The five days included morning, afternoon and evening sessions, covering Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, Rotorua and Dunedin.

"The reception in New Zealand was very warm," says Ian Sewell, "and all the delegates enjoyed it, even though it was very hard work."

The New Zealand programme meant 240 presentations, in seven centres, during just four days, but for several weeks afterwards schools were ringing dealers expressing their appreciation of the visits.

As John Buchanan, EBU Manager of Acorn New Zealand said, "The Roadshows highlighted the commitment Acorn Computers and its software developers have to the education marketplace here."

The party then flew on to Australia for an Acorn international conference, followed by the Australian Computer in Education Conference and Exhibition. Sam Wauchope gave the closing address at the Acorn conference and a keynote speech at the national conference. The venue for both events was slightly unusual. It was the Panther Convention Centre, which is owned and operated by the Panthers' Rugby Club of Penrith, near Sydney.

The exhibition rooms were full of gaming machines, giving the place the look of a casino and not the usual setting for an education computing conference. As Sam Wauchope said before the exhibition opened, "I am not sure that this is going to work, but even if it doesn't they'll certainly remember it."

As it happens, both events were a great success. "Everyone was very positive," says Ian Sewell. "It was an ideal opportunity for Australian users to meet so many leading software experts and through presentations and discussions to get a glimpse into the future."

Greg Sebire, managing director of Acorn Computers Australia, says that the education market in Australia has a greater focus on hardware than is found in the UK. "We are trying to focus the need for good educational software to be the main determinant of the hardware platform in schools", he says. "We felt that this was best demonstrated by having the developers show their products at the two conferences.

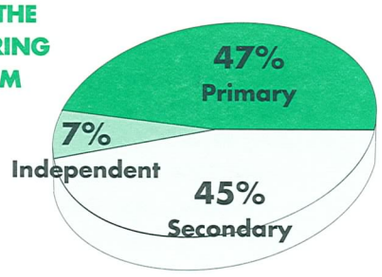
"The 20 UK developers at the National Conference gave all attendees a taste of some exciting applications.

NEW MODELS MAKE IMPACT IN EDUCATION MARKET

The results of Acorn's schools tracking study, carried out in Wave 13 in May, showed a quiet first quarter of the year. Only 30% of schools in the UK made any computer acquisitions during the first four months of 1993.

Despite this, Acorn's new models, the A3020 and the A4000, are already making an impact in the education market. Launched in September last year, these two models already account for one in six of all computer purchases made in the spring term and the indications are that their success will continue.

ACORN ACQUISITIONS IN THE SPRING TERM



Acorn continues to be the market leader in each of the school sectors, accounting for 41% of all computers bought. Primary schools account for 47% of Acorn's sales, making it the most important sector for Acorn in terms of volume. In secondary schools, Acorn is continuing to hold off the challenge of RM and the other PC manufacturers.

Information about schools' long term development plans shows that IT is very important. More than one in five placed IT as a high priority in their plans and over half placed it middle priority. The IT co-ordinator is counted as part of the top management in one in three schools.

Questions on budgets showed that secondary schools claim to have over seven times the IT budget of primaries, and a third more than independents. Primary schools claimed to have just £920.00 each on average to spend on IT equipment over the year.

Despite a quiet opening to the year, forecast figures suggest that the schools market will be as busy as ever. With LMS now fully in place, planning of purchases is becoming the fashion. This year schools said they intended to make most of their purchases in June or July, rather than spread them more evenly across the year as they have previously.

EXAM PASSES

Congratulations are due to the following on recent examination successes:-

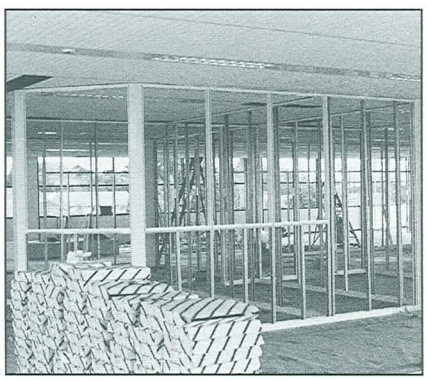
Ian Nicholas, Open University course, Certificate in Management.
Graham Biss, Open University course, Finance and PC modules.
Kay Morris, Open University course, Certificate in Management, "The Effective Manager".
Suzi Rudd, National Vocational Qualifications levels 1&2, Business and Administration - Financial route.
Lorraine Buckman - Certificate in Counselling Theory.

FRIDAY 13TH

FOR A SMOOTH MOVE

The selection of Friday thirteenth as the day for the big move to Acorn House never presented a problem for project manager Peter Dawson. "I've always considered 13 to be my lucky number," he says.

Now that the move is over the project team can breathe a sigh of relief that everything went so well. Peter, together with John Marshall, Denice Cook, Lorraine Buckman and the team of divisional co-ordinators, can look back on the weeks of hard work as a highly successful operation.



The partitions go up at Acorn House

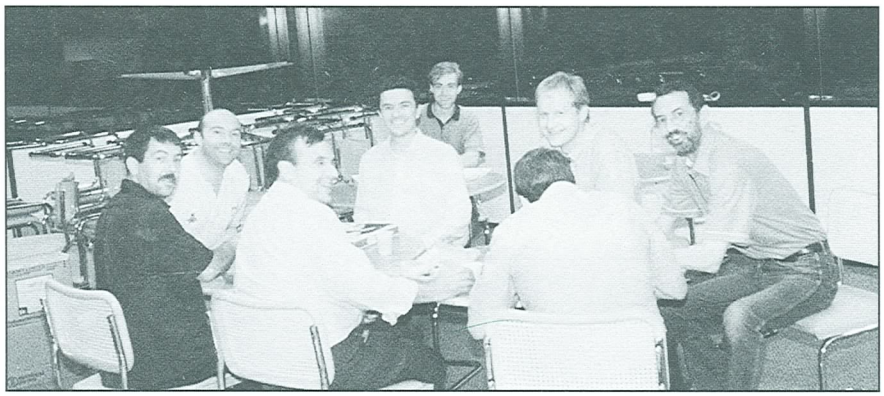
"Everyone seems to have settled in very well and the reaction I have had from people has been very positive," says Peter Dawson.

The project team first met at the end of February when negotiations were still going on with the property developers at Vision Park.

Soon, contractors and consultants were selected and work could begin on writing the detailed specification. This was a complex job involving 185 new work stations and 60 existing ones, together with all the associated under floor cabling and other services.

Floor plans had to be prepared, checked and revised until a comprehensive plan was in place to accommodate 230 people in the new 37,000 sq ft, three storey premises. Furniture had to be selected, partitions and doors located, kitchen and restaurant areas allocated.

The planning work was carried out on the Acorn Autocad system, which was a



Christening the Oak Cafeteria at Midnight

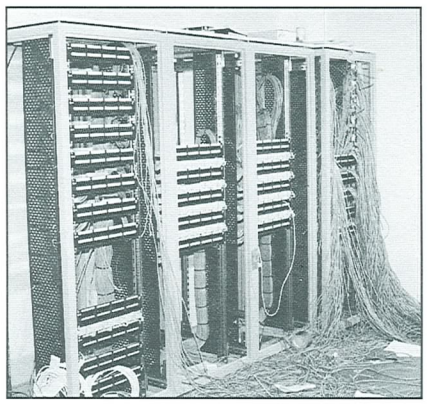
On 14 June the move date was fixed and the main contractor soon started work fitting out the new Acorn House. Weekly progress meetings were held towards the end of the preparation period and those most closely involved with the project were working 60 to 70 hours per week to make sure that no detail was overlooked.

With 13 August rapidly approaching, people who were going to be away on holiday packed their things so that they could be moved in their absence.

John Marshall, who looked after the IT side of the move, made sure that all computers were installed, checked and running.

Denice Cook, who had been primarily responsible for facilities, furniture and the move itself, made sure that all everything was ready for use.

By 16 Monday the central computer was working normally, so that the warehouse and other essential services could operate. Progressively all the departments came on stream at Vision Park and most people were working

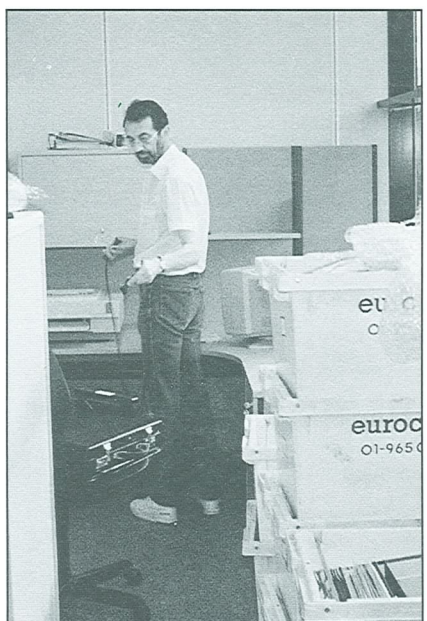


Just follow the instructions and installation is simp

normally by Friday 20 August.

It had been what is known in the office relocation business as a "fast track" move. The usual period taken for such a relocation would be nine months. The Acorn move had been compressed into just five months.

"It was the result," says Peter Dawson, "of everyone working together, attention to detail by the project team and divisional co-ordinators, and excellent work by the consultants and contractors."



QUICK ACTION HELPS SAVE CAR

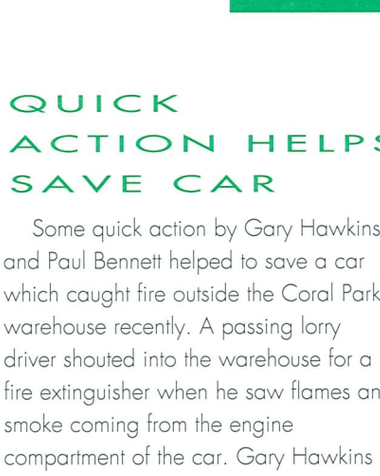
Some quick action by Gary Hawkins and Paul Bennett helped to save a car which caught fire outside the Coral Park warehouse recently. A passing lorry driver shouted into the warehouse for a fire extinguisher when he saw flames and smoke coming from the engine compartment of the car. Gary Hawkins and Paul Bennett responded quickly with two CO_2 appliances and had succeeded in putting out the fire before the brigade arrived. Fortunately, all three occupants of the car escaped safely.

Miss T Newton, driver of the car, wrote to express her thanks for the help she received.

She said, "I am writing to thank you for your help and consideration yesterday when our car caught fire outside your building.

"I am sure the damage to the car would have been much worse if it were not for the quick thinking and actions by members of your staff."

ANOTHER WIN FOR THE ACORN CRICKET TEAM



Dave MacKay - an early call to the bar

The Acorn cricket team recently played a friendly match against Callfind, Hertfordshire.

Callfind won the toss and put Acorn into bat. An excellent start by Thomas the Tonk Engine and Murray Papworth soon put Acorn in a strong position. Both scored a maximum 25 before retiring.

With Captain W (Alistair) making a rapid 20, the Acorn team eventually reached 110 for 7 in the 13 allotted overs. Although not unbeatable, it was a good score, setting Callfind a run rate of 8.5 per over.

Acorn's bowling, however, proved to be too strong for Callfind and they were all out for 51. This was largely due to 4 wickets for 6 runs by Geordie, including 3 clean bowled in one over.

Murray Papworth and Saul also picked up 2 wickets each.

After the match everyone adjourned to the Pavillion for some beer, food and a few bar games. It was an excellent evening and a fitting end to a highly successful season for the Acorn cricket team.

FOOTBALLERS WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY THE ACORN NAME

The Acorn five aside football team, which won the St Ives district league last season, will continue to carry the Acorn name this year, although it will no longer ask for financial support from the company.

The original team squad was ten strong with seven players working for Acorn.

As the years passed, however, various team members have retired, either through injury or leaving the area, which has meant an increase in non-Acorn employees in order to maintain the team's strength in the league. The latest injury victim is Dave Lumley, but although he has had to retire as a player he will continue to manage the team.

The team will continue to play under the Acorn name and looks forward to a successful coming season.

"The team would like to thank the company for the financial support over the last few years," says Dave Lumley.

ALVI FERNANDEZ

Alvi Fernandez, one of the Sydney office support staff, left Acorn Australia earlier this year to return to Uruguay to get married. Alvi hopes to continue the Acorn connection by setting up a training school for Acorn computers in Monte Video. Alvi, who was well known to staff in the UK, New Zealand and at the Melbourne offices, joined Acorn in January 1987 as a school leaver.

He began in the despatch department, but in his spare time Alvi read just about any and every Acorn product manual he could lay his hands on.

Alvi was promoted to the service division of Acorn, where he developed an excellent product knowledge and training skills through being involved in the computer industry. He was again promoted to a technical support role in 1988.

During 1991/92 Alvi travelled to Acorn New Zealand and to the UK for product training to further develop his knowledge.

He co-ordinated the school network operation and ensured that communication between clients and Acorn remained at the highest standards.

Alvi's ability to handle a variety of tasks simultaneously made him an invaluable acquisition to the Acorn Sydney team - trouble-shooting was his speciality!

Everyone at the Sydney office was very sorry to see Alvi leave, but wish him and his wife Anna every happiness for the future.

NEW NAMES, NEW FACES

Technical Division
Geoffrey Hitchin - Design Engineer
Chris Marshall - Software Engineer
Owen Love - Software Engineer
Colette Rose - Software Engineer
Philip Harris - Software Engineer

Sales & Marketing Division
Susan Cosby - Regional Account Executive
Hillary Bassant - Press/PR Officer
Wyn Thomas - Sales Manager (International) Professional Markets

Finance Division
Steve Humm - Credit Control Clerk
Suzi Rudd - Sales Ledger Clerk
Joanna Bienek - Date Entry Clerk
John Bennett - Senior Analyst/Programmer
Terry Edgley - Systems Development Mgr.

Manufacturing & Operations Division
Claire Finnell - Warranty Returns Assistant

Australia
John Stokes - Service Manager
Nick Tozer - Tech. Support Consultant
Viviana Cairo - P.A. to the M.D.
Lisa Radovic - Receptionist
Amanda Warrensmith - Accounts

New Zealand
Tim Fahey - Accountant

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